DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 069 HE 022 089

AUTHOR Stage, Frances K.; Williams, Palisa D.
TITLE Students' Motivation and Changes in Motivation during the First Year of College. ASHE 1988 Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE Nov 88
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (St. Louis, MO, November 3-6, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; College Attendance; *College Freshmen; *Enrollment Influences; Higher Education; Longitudinal Studies; Student Characteristics; Student Development; *Student Motivation; Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS *ASHE Annual Meeting

ABSTRACT

First year university students are identified and categorized according to their motivations for enrolling in colleges. Characteristics and achievements of students with varying motivations are discussed, and changes in motivation during the first year of college are explored. Students were surveyed in the fall during the first 2 weeks of class to obtain demographic information and measures of motivation and commitment. They were resurveyed in the spring during the last month of classes of the same academic year to obtain new measures and motivation. The following classifications of motivational orientations were identified for undergraduates: certification, cognitive, community service, change, social, recommendation, and escape. Some of the changes in motivation may be viewed as positive, and others as negative. An increase in measure of the cognitive or community service scales may be viewed as positive movement toward certain stated goals of higher education, but increases on the escape, recommendation, or change scales could be viewed as negative. The subgroups of community service, social, cognitive, escape, and certification showed significant decreases in the motivation factor in which they had initially scored highest. Students in this study showed a significant increase in the recommendation motivation factor (recommendations of others increased in importance as a reason to enroll in college). Further research might focus on types of experiences which may be related to increasing one's desire to serve others or to increasing one's intellectual thirst. Contains 18 references. (Author/SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED303069

Students' Motivation and Changes in Motivation During the First Year of College

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ASHE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Frances K. Stage
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership & Policy
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Palisa D. Williams
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership & Policy
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

HE 022 091

ASHE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Texas A&M University
Department of Educational Administration
College Station, TX 77843
(409) 845-0393

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Adam's Mark Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri, November 3-6, 1988. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify and categorize first year university students according to their motivations for enrolling in college, discuss characteristics and achievements of students with varying motivations, and to explore changes in motivation during the first year of college. Students (n=165) were surveyed in fall during the first two weeks of class to obtain demographic information and measures of motivation and commitment. Students were resurveyed in spring during the last month of classes of the same academic year to obtain new measures of motivation.

Students' Motivation and Changes in Motivation During the First Year of College

Students' motivation has proven to be an important variable in attempts to discover factors which influenced involvement in campus activities, attitudes toward college, and academic success (Ramist, 1981). In fact, in conducting research on the college student, it is nearly impossible to conduct a meaningful study of student outcomes without including a measure of the individual's motivation.

College success is partially based on students' commitment, expressed as motivation, drive or effort, to invest the time, energy and resources to meet the academic and social demands that institutions impose upon them. Motivation has been measured variously as degree-level goal (Astin, 1975; Terenzini & Wright, 1987), intent to dropout (Astin, 1975; Bean, 1980) and parental expectation (Tinto, 1975). These factors have all been demonstrated to have significant relationships to persistence.

An additional significant dimension of motivation is individual commitment to work toward the attainment of goals. Goal commitment was defined by Tinto (1987) as a student's commitment to the educational, occupational or career goals that he/she has established. Institutional commitment refers to the student's commitment to the college or university in which he/she is enrolled. More specifically, it indicates the degree of

effort individuals are willing to exert to achieve goals they have set within a given higher educational institution. The greater one's commitments, the more likely are they to persist in college.

Many of the longitudinal studies of college student success in the last decade have found significant relationships between these commitments and college achievement factors (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983).

However, these measures of motivations and commitments are quantitative. Little research has been done on the more qualitative aspects of motivation. Most researchers ask, "to what degree are students motivated?" and ignore a simpler, yet more difficult to measure question, "what motivates students to attend college?"

The few studies that do attempt to measure this qualitative aspect of undergraduate motivation usually do not attempt to tie the construct to other aspects of the college experience such as involvement on campus or academic success (Stage, in press). In other words, do students with different motivations for entering a university differ from one another in background characteristics, in commitment to their goals, and in their academic successes?

Additionally, some studies of students' motivations have revealed disturbing trends. In examining decades of research into new college students' lifetime goals Astin (1985) finds in general a growing egocentric orientation and less concern with

intellectualism and with the plight of humankind. Does the college environment provide experiences which can help students become more intellectual and humanistic? Most would claim so, but little research has been conducted on the topic.

The purpose of this research was threefold:

1. to identify students' motivations for enrolling in a university,
2. to discuss characteristics and achievements of students with differing motivations, and
3. to explore changes in motivation which occurred during the first year of college.

Review of the Literature

Much research on the college student focused on influences on outcomes achievement, satisfaction, and persistence. This study focused on differing motivations of college students and how characteristics of the student and achievements at college differed for students of differing motivations, and how these motivations changed over the first year of college.

A diversity of factors; family background, academic experiences and personal attributes, have a significant impact on the overall performance of college freshmen (Tinto, 1987). These attributes not only affect an individual's ability to perform well academically, but also their drive or motivation to do so (Kohen, Nestel and Karmas, 1976).

Several researchers have identified motivational categories that provide a framework for helping to understand why students choose to attend postsecondary institutions. The Education Participation Scale (EPS) was developed by Boshier (1977) and refined by Morstain and Smart (1974) who derived six scales that provided reasons for adult students' drive to attend college. The six reasons included a need for social relationships, to fulfill external expectations, to serve humanity, for professional advancement, for professional certification, or for purely cognitive interests. The alpha reliabilities on these six scales ranged from .72 to .86.

The EPS has recently been used in studies of traditional-aged undergraduates (Gordon, 1982; Stage, 1988; Stage, in press; Wolfgang & Dowling, 1981). Wolfgang and Dowling (1981) contrasted traditional and nontraditional aged students' reasons for attending college and found that undergraduate students have a greater need for personal associations and friendships and for fulfilling external expectations which influenced their motivation for participation in postsecondary education.

This research on undergraduates however was based on research and scales created by studying older adult students. One of the purposes of this study was to conduct a factor analyis of responses of undergraduates to identify scales relevant to traditional aged undergraduates. Differences in students of differing motivational types according to characteristics of students and their experiences in college will be explored.

Method

First year students at a university were surveyed during the first two weeks of the semester by taking a sample of 20% of all freshman English classes (n=415). Students were given the EPS (Boshier, 1982) and asked questions regarding commitment to college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983), demographic information, and financial aid. Institutional records were used to obtain GPA and credits earned for fall semester as well as spring registration information. Finally, in late spring the sample was surveyed by mail using the EPS. Fifty-seven per cent (57%) of the original responded to the second survey.

A comparison of the final sample to the demographics of the general first year class revealed some differences:

	Sample	Population
Gender (% male)	41.1	51.0
Ethn (% minority)	7.6	9.3
Age	18.0	19.1
GPA (fall)	2.6	2.2
Credits Earned	12.87	11.33

Many of these differences are unsurprising. One would expect the spring sample to contain fewer minorities and students with higher fall GPAs because approximately 12% of the first year students at this institution dropped out after the fall semester, and a proportionately higher number of minorities left.

Measurement of Variables

Background Characteristics:

parents' education = mother's education + father's education

(1 < 12 years, 2- high school graduate, 3- two yrs college, 4- bachelor's, 5- graduate or professional)

ethnicity (1 - American Indian, Black, Hispanic, 0 - others)

Campus Factors:

institutional commitment - mean score 5 items

goal commitment - mean score 3 items

residency (1 - off campus, 2 - off campus with students, 3 - on campus)

work (0 - working on campus, 1 - not working on campus)

faid self - proportion of expenses paid by self or parents (0 - 0, 1 - 1/4, 2 - 1/2, 3 - 3/4, 4 - all)

GPA - fall semester GPA

ratio - credits earned fall semester/credits attempted.

Motivational Orientation:

scores ranging from 0, no influence, to 3, much influence were recorded for 40 items describing reasons for enrolling in college. Sample items include: to increase my job competence, to satisfy an enquiring mind, and to be accepted by others.

Analysis

A factor analysis of the initial EPS data specifying an

oblique rotation was conducted. Data from all students who responded to the initial survey (n=415) were used. Examination of the plot of eigenvalues revealed seven identifiable factors. A second factor analysis was conducted restricting the number of factors in the solution to seven. Finally, items which had factor loadings of .4 or higher were used to create factors.

Factor loadings were used as item weightings to create mean scores for each student on each of the seven scales. Students were classified into motivational categories based on their highest mean score from among the seven scales.

Scores for each student on each of the seven factors were recreated using the same factor loadings and responses to the spring survey. Fall scores were compared with spring scores for each factor within each subgroup using t-tests.

Results

Factor Analysis

The following classifications of motivational orientations were identified for undergraduates: Certification, Cognitive, Community Service, Change, Social, Recommendation, and Escape (see Table 1).

A comparison of the factor analyses of undergraduate students' reasons for enrolling in this study with the adult responses used in the Morstain and Smart (1974) study revealed some differences. A seventh factor labeled Change emerged ("To provide a contrast to the rest of my life," "To get a break in

the routine of home or work"). However, none of the students were classified in that category as their most important reason for attending college.

The remaining six factors corresponded almost exactly with Morstain and Smart's factors: Professional Advancement, Cognitive Interest, Social Welfare, Social Relationships, External Expectations, and Escape/Stimulation. There were only slight differences in the items which loaded on particular factors. In most instances one or two of the lower loading items from the Morstain and Smart study did not load on the same factor for this study. The EPS which Morstain and Smart used contained 40 items. The modified version used here contained 40 items. In some cases those items had been eliminated from the instrument.

Morstain and Smart created mean scores for each factor for the entire study group and were able to rank factors according to overall importance. In the present study, numbers of students categorized for a given factor were used to establish relative importance. Comparisons of the relative importance of the two factors follows:

	Undergraduate Freshmen	Adult Education
Recommendation	1	4
Escape	2	6
Cognitive	3	2
Community Service	4	3
Certification	5	1
Social	6	5

Table 2 presents mean scores for students on background and commitment characteristics and achievement variables for the fall semester. An analysis of variance between groups revealed no significant differences on these variables.

By the end of their first year of college 65% of the students identified different reasons for enrolling in college. Table 3 presents mean scores on the fall and spring measures of students' motivation as well as t-test significances for differences in scores by motivation subgroup as well as for the entire sample.

There were several significant differences. For the pooled sample there was a significant increase in the recommendation factor. There were significant decreases in the social, community service, and change factors.

Discussion

Given some of the stated goals of higher education, to increase one's awareness of and concern for others, to awaken an interest in knowledge, and to broaden one's interests, some of these changes in motivation may be viewed as positive, others as negative. An increase in measure of the Cognitive or the Community Service scales may be viewed as positive movement toward some of these goals. By contrast, increases on the Recommendation, Escape, or Change scales could be viewed as negative. Examination of this data move us another step toward

revealing some of the intrinsic values associated with the postsecondary educational experience.

The students studied here demonstrated changes along several of these motivational dimensions. Whether such changes were the result of the college environment or were the result of maturation cannot be answered in this study.

Several of the subgroups showed significant decreases in the motivation factor in which they had initially scored highest. Social, community service, cognitive, escape, and certification were such subgroups. One possible explanation is that these students came to college as idealists and that their original reasons for enrolling seemed less important at the end of their first year. Another explanation is that the students were becoming broader in focus and beginning to see other values to pursuing a degree in higher education. A third possibility is regression toward the mean.

Decreases in some of the factors which are valued by faculty and administrators may be a natural part of the four year evolution which results in the educated graduate. Other research has found that some college experiences have positive influences on students' humanitarian and civic values (Pascarella, Ethington, & Smart, 1988). Perhaps negative changes are a natural part of the questioning of ideas and values that begins with transition into the college experience.

Students in this study demonstrated a significant increase in the motivation factor "recommendation." In other words,

recommendations of others increased in importance as a reason to reenroll in college. This increase may be negative, or it may represent, for some students, a realistic response from encouraging parents, faculty, and/or advisors toward discouraged freshmen.

There were limitations to this research. Ideally, a larger sample size would have been employed to conduct the factor analysis. This sample of 415 was adequate according to the "ten times the number of items" rule or 400 which is sometimes recommended. Because there were no striking differences between the results of this factor analysis and the earlier one (Morstain & Smart, 1974), this was not viewed as a problem.

Conducting a large number of t-tests as is the case here can lead to an increasing instance of Type I error. Results of this particular part of the analysis should be interpreted with caution.

This study provoked nearly as many questions as it answered. The focus of this research was not broad enough to determine which campus experiences might be related to changes in motivation for attending college. Further research might focus on types of experiences which may be related to increasing one's desire to serve others or to increasing one's intellectual thirst.

References

Astin, A. (1985). Achieving Educational Excellence. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. (1975). Preventing Students from Dropping Out. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bean, J. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of a causal model of student attrition. Research in Higher Education, 12, 155-187.

Boshier, R. (1982). Educational Participation Scales. Vancouver: Learning Press.

Boshier, R. (1977). Motivational orientations revisited: Lifespace motives and the education participation scale. Adult Education, 27, 89-115.

Kohen, A.L., Nestel, G. & Karmas, C. (1976). Factors affecting individual persistence rates in undergraduate college programs. American Educational Research Journal, 15, 233-252.

Gordon, V.N. (1982). Reasons for entering college and academic and vocational preferences. Journal of College Student Personnel, 23, 371-377.

Morstain, B.R. & Smart, J.C. (1974). Reasons for participation in adult education courses: A multivariate analysis of group differences. Adult Education, 24, 2, 83-98.

Pascarella, E. & Chapman, D. (1983). A multi-institutional, path analytic validation of Tinto's model of college withdrawal.

American Educational Research Journal, 20, 87-102.

Pascarella, E., Ethington, C., & Wolfle, L. (1988). The influence of college on humanitarian/civic involvement values. Journal of Higher Education, 59, 412-437.

Pascarella, E. & Terenzini, P. (1983). Predicting voluntary freshman year persistence/withdrawal behavior in a residential university: A path analytic validation of Tinto's model. Journal of Educational Psychology, 75, 215-226.

Ramist, L. (1981). College Student Attrition and Retention. New York: College Entrance Examination Board.

Stage, F. K. (1988). Student typologies and the study of college outcomes. Review of Higher Education, 11, 247-257.

Stage, F.K. (in press). Student development and the study of college outcomes: Filling the gaps. Review of Higher Education.

Stage, F.K. (in press). Motivation, academic and social integration, and the early dropout. American Educational Research Journal.

Terenzini, P. & Wright, T. (1987). Students' personal growth during the first two years of college. The Review of Higher Education, 10, 259-271.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. Review of Educational Research, 45, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes of

Student Attrition. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Table 1

A Typology of Motivational Orientation Items with

Factor Loadings from Boshier's EPS

Factor	Item	Factor Loading
Certification	To increase my job competence	.6467
	To give me higher status in my job	.6100
	To keep up with competition	.4741
	To secure professional advancement	.4178
	To keep up with others	.4128
Cognitive	To learn just for the joy of learning	.7849
	To learn just for the sake of learning	.7534
	To satisfy an enquiring mind	.5879
	To seek knowledge for its own sake	.5719
Community Svc	To prepare for community service	.8510
	To improve my ability to participate in community work	.8142
	To improve my ability to serve humankind	.6374
	To gain insight into human relations	.5593
	To become more effective as a citizen	.4641
Change	To provide a contrast to the rest of my life	.7307
	To get a break in the routine of home or work	.5628
	To provide a contrast to my previous education	.5586

Table 1 (continued)

Factor	Item	Factor Loading
Social	To improve my social relationships	.8686
	To make new friends	.8310
	To fulfill a need for personal associations and friendships	.7951
	To become acquainted with congenial people	.6126
	To participate in group activity	.6096
	To maintain or improve my social position	.5604
	To be accepted by others	.5007
	To keep up with others	.4407
Recommendation	To comply with the suggestions of someone else	.9354
	To comply with instructions from someone else	.7138
	To carry out the recommendation of some authority	.6511
Escape	To overcome the frustration of day to to day living	.6827
	To get relief from boredom	.6036
	To get a break in the routine of home or work	.5424
	To have a few hours away from responsibilities	.5239
	To escape the intellectual narrowness of my occupation	.5085
	To escape television	.4737
	To escape an unhappy relationship	.4618
	To stop myself becoming a "vegetable"	.4361

Table 2

Mean Scores and Background Variables

by Motivation Group

	RECOMM n=39	ESCAPE n=29	COGNIT n=27	COMSVC n=25	CERTIF n=24	SOCIAL n=17
PARENT'S EDUCATION	6.958	5.586	6.593	6.320	7.077	6.706
GENDER (% MALE)	51.3	37.9	22.2	36.0	45.8	47.1
ETHNICITY (% MINORITY)	10.3%	6.9%	7.4%	8.0%	4.2%	0%
INSTCOM	18.179	18.931	19.296	19.080	17.750	18.824
GOALCOM	11.769	11.828	11.296	11.280	11.292	11.294
RESIDENCY	2.897	2.862	2.667	2.840	2.917	2.412
WORK (% not employed on campus)	89.7%	93.1%	100%	92.0%	91.7%	94.1%
FAIDSELF	2.872	2.552	2.889	2.520	2.375	2.588
GPA	2.530	2.719	2.625	2.359	2.705	2.779
RATIO	.891	.956	.889	.906	.909	1.726

Table 3

Mean Scores and T-tests for Changes in Motivations

by Motivation Group

	ALL n=161	RECOMM n=39	ESCAPE n=29	COGNIT n=27	COMSVC n=25	CERTIF n=24	SOCIAL n=17
RECOMM1	.792 *	1.396	.842	.448	.690	.420 **	.553 *
RECOMM2	.914	1.280	.933	.523	.923	.764	.876
SOCIAL1	.945 **	.850	.915	.904	.936	.834	1.470 **
SOCIAL2	.843	.801	.792	.772	1.420	.727	1.156
COMSVC1	.920 ***	.799	.781	.917	1.545 ***	.643	.941
COMSVC2	.797	.713	.798	.868	1.106	.510	.840
COGNIT1	1.000	.845	.952	1.446 *	1.087	.823	.873
COGNIT2	.954	.785	.982	1.281	1.086	.725	.921
ESCAPE1	.352	.254	.695 **	.253	.355	.245	.312
ESCAPE2	.353	.230	.462	.307	.451	.267	.349
CERTF1	1.080	1.013	.947	.970	1.175	1.350 **	1.119
CERTF2	1.017	1.008	.873	.893	1.174	1.103	1.125
CHANGE1	.575 **	.457	.864 **	.571	.663	.365	.523
CHANGE2	.466	.436	.556	.467	.562	.355	.389

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$